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HOME LIFE IN AMERICA.

IT is the habit of old people to cry down the present, and to cry up the past. "It was different when we were young," they say; "and it was better," they generally add. The old time is always the good time, with the old, and, we suppose, always will be. The poets have done much to bring about this opinion, for they are never weary of singing about "The days that are no more." It was so in Greece and Rome, and it was so in England. "When this old cap was new" everything was as it should be; and every virtue under the sun was impersonated in "The Queen's Old Courtier," and "Fine Old English Gentleman." It was a pity that these worthies had to die before their virtues could be found out; but they had to all the same. We do not agree with the poets in this matter, and never shall. But we are willing to agree with them, if they will agree with us. We will admit that the old time is the best time, but they must admit that no time is so old as the present time. It is the fact, whether they admit it or not, and it follows, therefore, that it is the best time. And it ought to be; for peoples, like persons, "live and learn." Were it otherwise, all the battles that have been lost and won, all the great men who have lived and died—everything, in short, that was, and is not, would have been to no purpose. It is the crab that walks backwards—not man. The race advances; it does not recede.

Not to philosophise on so evident a truism, however, let us look a little into the simple matter of home life. Forty, thirty, twenty years ago, the Home Life of America was very different from what it is to-day. It was less expensive, and it was less comfortable. The man of average means lived within his means, but it was at the sacrifice of something. He did not deny himself the "creature comforts," but he denied himself the luxury of books, and his wife and daughters the luxury of dress. Fifty calico dresses were worn then where one is worn now; while books, which now run through twenty editions, were a long time then in creeping through one. Whether there are not too many books, and too few calico dresses, now, is not the question; it is the fact which we are considering. Thirty years ago the cost of a good brick house, in a pleasant city street, was about equal to the yearly rental of such a house now: at any rate, it was not much greater. To be sure, there were drawbacks to those houses, which no longer exist. We have ventilation where we had none; we are warm where we were cold; in other words, we have comfort where we had discomfort. This has cost us something, but it is worth what it has cost us. Who will may wish back the close chambers, the windy passage-ways, the hard, black hair-cloth sofas of forty years ago. We would as soon wish back the uncarpeted floors, and the wooden settles of our ancestors. These were good enough, perhaps, for the old time, but they are not good enough for the older time. We have lived—and learned.

"There is no royal road to learning," is an old axiom, but the average American will not be convinced of the truth of it. It is hard to convince him of the truth of anything, when it is to his interest to believe the contrary. He can find, or make, royal roads anywhere. And he does, though many of them are paved with anything but good intentions. "Get rich, my son, get rich, honestly if you can; if not—get rich." It was not a Frenchman who said this, although one might think so, but a member of that plain-speaking sect—the Quakers. The average

American does not "speak out in meeting," he is too smart for that—he merely puts his intention in practice. It is not so much his fault, perhaps, as the fault of the period, that he makes haste to grow rich. Everybody does so. The standard of morals is no longer what it was. Many things have conspired, of late, to change it; among others the success which follows those who violate it most audaciously. It is no matter how they get rich—if they only get rich enough!

"Plate sin in gold
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks,
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it."

The passion of America, to-day, is the passion for wealth, and its weakness is the weakness for display.

merely that the walls which were once bare are now crowded with pictures, nor that the rooms which were called libraries now contain books; it is in the general air of elegance and refinement which pervades the whole household, and which, in itself, is a liberal education.

MORNING DEW.

THE intellectual activity of the present century, which has discovered so many of Nature's "open secrets," has discovered nothing so important as Comparative Mythology. Of mythology, as it was understood of old, there was already more than enough—considering how it was misunderstood. It darkened what it assumed to light up; and what it pretended to unravel, it tangled in a more inextricable snarl. The gods of Greece and Rome, with which it chiefly occupied itself, were described in school-boy fashion—Jove, or Zeus, being the son of Saturn, or Kronos; Neptune, or Poseidon, his brother; and Juno, or Hera, his sister and wife. What they signified we were not told; nor did the mythologists know. The clue was lost for ages, and was only discovered when the dead language which contained it was restored to life by the scholars of France and Germany. When Sanscrit began to be studied, mythology began to be understood, and a new philosophy was the result—the Philosophy of Comparative Mythology. It is a noble one in many respects, simplifying what was complex and obscure, and lifting a load of religious obloquy from the shoulders of poor humanity. Heretofore, the early races of mankind were mere idolators to us—worshippers of stocks and stones; they have now become devout men, to whom the gods they were supposed to worship were only symbols of the everlasting Powers of Nature. It was not Zeus, or Dyaus, that they worshipped, but the all-containing Heaven. Deity was ever present to them, in one form or another. Not that they defined it, even to themselves, as we have been taught to do. It was a Presence which they felt—a Mystery which they adored, in their simple, child-like way. It was in the Light, and in the Darkness; it was in all the changes of the Year. An abstraction at first, it was in the nature of man that it should take Shape, and it took a Shape. It took many shapes before it reached the Greeks, who saw gods in everything—Zeus in the sky, Poseidon in the sea, Phœbus in the sun, Artemis in the moon, and dryads and hamadryads in every grove and tree. They had a nymph or goddess, called Prokris, who was

slain by her husband Kephalos. Their poets bewept her fate, but it is doubtful if they knew who she was. If they had traced her name back to its Sanscrit root, they would have found that she was the dew. The story of Prokris and Kephalos is the old Aryan myth of the sun drying the dew. The knowledge of this fact imparts an interest to it that it had not before, and vitalizes for us the ethereal presence in Mr. Nehlig's illustration, which appears as the frontispiece of this number.

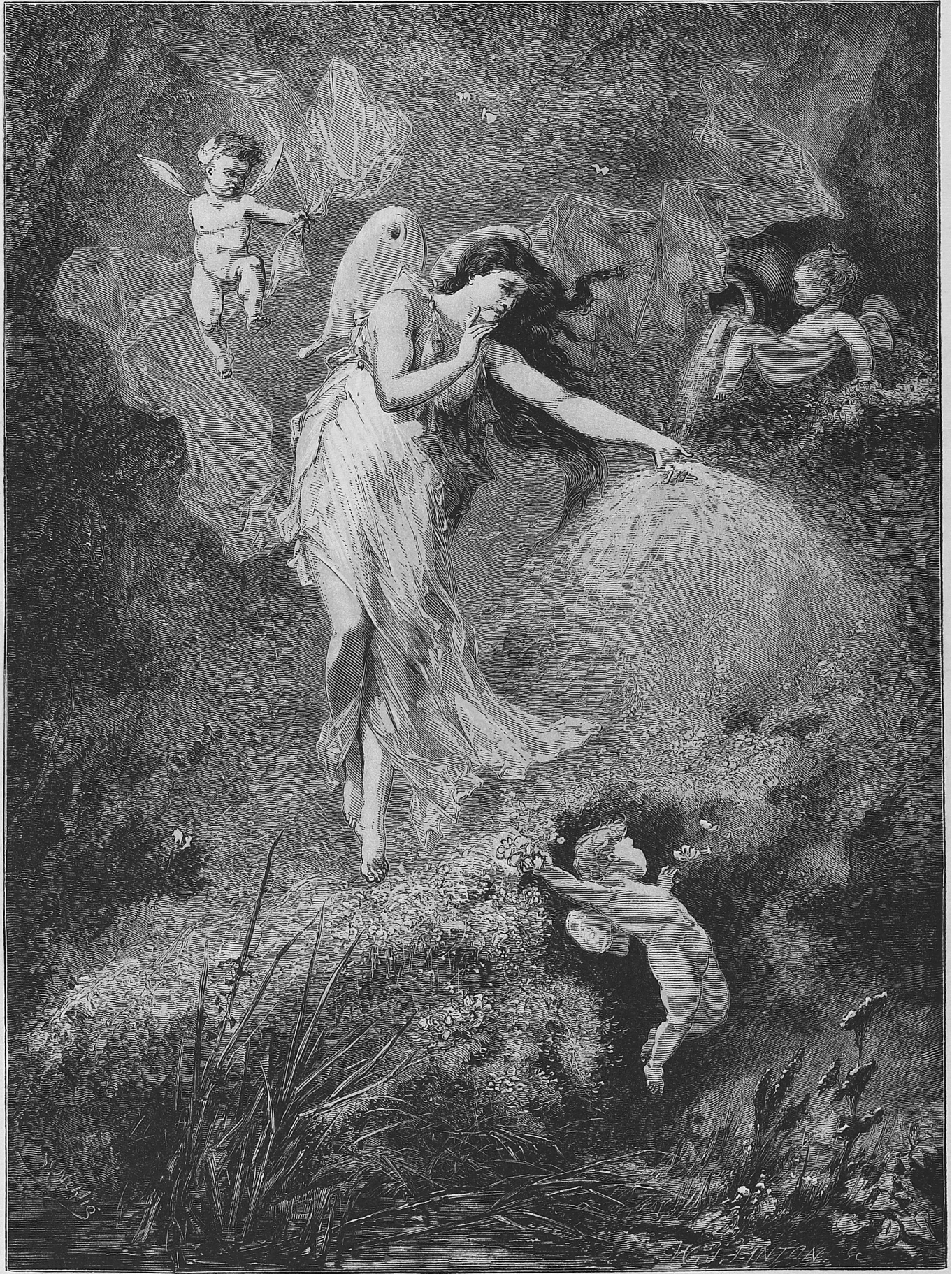
Prokris and Kephalos have gone, but the sun and the morning dew remain!

"And still the heart doth need a language, still
Doth the old instinct bring back the old names,
And to yon starry world they now are gone,
Spirits or gods, that used to share this earth
With man as with their friend; and to the lover
Yonder they move, from yonder visible sky
Shoot influence down; and even at this day
'Tis Jupiter who brings what'er is great,
And Venus who brings everything that's fair."



IN A TIGHT PLACE.—W. M. CARY.

Both are bad, no doubt, from a moral point of view: still, both are productive of good. But for the first we should be content, as we once were, with stage-coaches and sailing packets, and but for the last we should be content with the old, worn-out homes of our ancestors. Now we are content with neither. The change which has come over us in regard to our home-life, is an evidence that we have grown—we will not say more cultivated or more refined (for that would sound offensive) but more cosmopolitan. We are not merely Americans, we are citizens of the world. We have learned to travel, and have learned something by our travel. To be sure, we are laughed at abroad, especially for our extravagance, but let those laugh who win. They do not laugh in London over the rare books which we purchase for our libraries; nor do they laugh in Paris over the pictures which we purchase for our galleries. We bring back more than we take away. This fact is nowhere so apparent as in many American homes. It is not



MORNING DEW.—VICTOR NEELIG.